

# Senate Unanimously Approves Compromise on Regulations

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The Senate yesterday unanimously approved a compromise giving Congress new powers to block individual government regulations as an alternative to a broader regulatory moratorium approved last month by the House.

The two measures go to a House-Senate conference, where differences could be difficult to resolve. A spokesman for House Majority Whip Tom DeLay (R-Tex.), sponsor of the House bill, said DeLay is "very firm" that a moratorium should be approved.

The House-approved moratorium would bar issuance of new regulations—with exceptions for some routine or emergency situations—until the end of the year or until enactment of more comprehensive regulatory legislation.

As approved by the Senate, 100 to 0, the regulatory review compromise would put regulations with an economic impact of \$100 million or more on hold for 45 days while Congress could consider legislation to block them.

The Senate's decision to scuttle the moratorium in favor of a more selective approach to regulatory overhaul represented the second time this month the Senate has rejected a major House GOP initiative, following its defeat March 2 of a balanced budget constitutional amendment.

Although technically not part of the House GOP's "Contract With America," the moratorium is related to broader legislation aimed at curbing costly and burdensome regulations and is an integral part of Republican efforts to curb government.

Both bills would cover regulations

issued since last November, although the Senate measure would not delay implementation of rules that have been approved. Sen. Don Nickles (R-Okla.) estimated that 122 regulations would fall in the latter category, including some that Congress might want to consider disapproving. He did not identify these rules.

The moratorium was dumped in the Senate after its sponsors concluded it would lead to a disruptive fight among Republicans and to a veto by President Clinton that could not be overridden. Clinton said yesterday, "The Senate's approach—not the blunt instrument of a moratorium—is the right way to reform regulations."

Nickles, who joined with Sen. Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.) in proposing the congressional review procedure as a more widely acceptable alternative, insisted yesterday that it would be even more effective than a moratorium because it is permanent and has fewer exceptions.

Democrats agreed it would work better but also described it as far less extreme. A moratorium would "sweep out the good with the bad" and thus was unacceptable, argued Sen. Carl M. Levin (D-Mich.). "I suppose it's all in the eye of the beholder," said Sen. John H. Chafee (R-R.I.), who had objected to the moratorium but supported the review procedure.

Under pressure from Democrats who worried the moratorium might spring back to life in a House-Senate conference, Nickles said he would fight for the Senate's position but stopped short of saying he would refuse to agree to a moratorium. Democrats have vowed to kill any resurrected moratorium.

3/30/95  
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